

**OPENING DAY SPEECH BY HAWAII HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MINORITY  
LEADER,  
REP. GENE WARD**

Wednesday, January 19, 2011

**Aloha Mai Kakou, Aloha!**

**Welcome to the People's House—Your House of Representatives...the one I like to call the Market Place of Ideas.**

**Speaker Say, Governor Abercrombie, Lt. Governor Schatz, Chief Justice, my fellow Colleagues, former Governors, special guests, ladies and gentlemen and the people of the great state of Hawaii.**

**Mahalo for taking your valuable time to join us on this very important day of the year.**

**When the business of, by, and for the people of Hawaii begins.**

**Today marks a very critical juncture in our state's history. We have a \$800 million state deficit to fill, jobs to create, and an economy to turn around and a new system of educational governance to establish. It is going to be a busy and intense session, but I am confident, optimistic and quite positive – if we work together, it will be a very good session.**

**Mr. Speaker, colleagues, we walked into this chamber through the same doors. As a collective body of 51, we can, and we should work hard every day to make a difference in the lives of all our residents.**

**The public is counting on us to deliver results, not rhetoric.**

**And I pledge this caucus' support to that end.**

**RECOGNIZING THE THREE FRESHMEN:**

**Before I speak briefly about specific legislation, I would like to introduce three people who are going to make a difference this session, and they are the freshmen members of our Caucus.**

**I am proud to recognize the addition of Rep. George Fontaine from Maui – a retired Maui Police Captain who has the passion, expertise and 25 years of experience in public safety, law and justice. (George-please stand and be recognized).**

**Also new to the Caucus is a graduate of Yale University who went on to work at the White House and US Mint before returning home. He is a graduate of Moanalua High School.. Please welcome- Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson. (Aaron please stand and be recognized.)**

**Our last new member is from the North Shore of Oahu and is widely known for his work in “Keeping the Country Country” and was a key player in bringing an outdated EIS to the Hawaii Supreme Court and winning – please welcome Rep. Gil Riviere -“Mr. Keep the Country Country! (Gil please stand and be recognized.)**

#### **WHY INTRODUCTIONS?**

**Mr. Speaker I’ve introduced these three freshman not just so our members and the public can get to know them better, but because they- along with the 5 other Republican veterans - collectively represent the voices of almost a quarter million people in the state of Hawaii who reside in their districts.**

**In addition to this large number of people, please know that we also represent the core values held in the majority of State Legislatures in this nation as well as the US Congress.**

**And we will speak of these core values regularly on this Floor.**

#### **OUR CORE VALUES**

**And what are these core values that I speak of?**

- First, you will hear our voices loud and clear in this Chamber NOT TO RAISE TAXES, especially the G.E.T. tax!**
- Second, we will be the watchdogs for fiscal discipline and controlling government spending;**
- Thirdly, we will tirelessly labor to create a better economic environment to help local small businesses thrive and create new jobs;**
- Fourth, we will insist on a more open and accountable government, especially when it comes to finances and education; and**
- Lastly, we will speak out loud and clear on this floor about EDUCATION EXCELLENCE and stimulating and accelerating student achievement.**

#### **HOLDING THE LINE ON TAXES**

**Let’s look at the first of these core values: NO NEW TAXES. Mr. Speaker, we will be submitting legislation that requires a super-majority to increase *both taxes AND FEES* during these hard economic times for the families of Hawaii.**

**Mr. Speaker, our Caucus is very pleased that both you and Governor Abercrombie have promised the people of Hawaii that you will not increase the G.E.T. tax. We stand with you in this promise and look forward to working together with you to fulfill it. Thank you Governor and Speaker for boldly speaking out early on this issue.**

**However, Governor Abercrombie has said (or implied) that he will not furlough government workers, or send prisoners to the mainland, or cut back on invasive species workers, or withhold or delay state income tax return refunds, just to name a few promises made in the last 12 months.**

**While promises made should be promises kept, the economic realities that face us today are daunting, but not insurmountable, but must be dealt with realistically.**

## **ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION**

**Now regarding our core value to create a better economic environment to help our small businesses thrive and create new jobs;**

**Our Caucus wants to stimulate the creation of thousands of new green jobs by pushing for legislation that puts photovoltaic systems on every roof in the state with no upfront costs. We have the capacity to do implement this important bill.**

**In this regard I would like to welcome back Governor Lingle to this Chamber and thank her for her service to the people of Hawaii for the past 8 years and especially for her development and implementation of the Hawaii Clean Energy Initiative - whereby we will be clean energy self-sufficient in 20 years.**

**We must continue to think and act as world leaders in this area and reject all forms of mediocrity when it comes to harnessing the sun, the wind, geo-thermal, ocean temperature inversion, and yes, even Rep. Thielen's favorite, wave energy sources! Mr. Speaker and colleagues, 2011 is our opportunity to excel in this area and achieve new heights in energy self-sufficiency. We must not think small – we must think big in this area!**

## **EDUCATION IS KEY**

**But, Mr. Speaker even though we have the potential to lead the world, we need to trim some deadweight we are carrying. I submit that the one thing that could hold us back from world greatness (and APEC is coming up soon ) is our educational system. Putting it bluntly, Hawaii has lived off of its good looks for too long, and now its time we start living off our brains.**

In short we must help our students accelerate their learning capacity. To do this end we will introducing legislation that will enable high school students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade who pass the SAT and AP tests, and qualify to get into UH, can skip 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

This “Study Hard and Skip A Grade Program” also comes with a scholarship to the University of Hawaii. The scholarship would be 50% of the \$10,000 that taxpayers pay for each student per year in our public school education system. Half of this amount, or \$5,000 would go to the student in the UH system, and the other half, yes, Mr. Speaker, goes into the General Fund.

Skipping the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in our Accelerated Student Learning bill is a win-win-win for our students, our overall education system, as well as the state budget. Mr. Speaker and colleagues I hope you will join us in this leapfrogging effort to get more of Hawaii’s student into college and excited about their futures.

We have made great strides in recent years with STEM education, especially robotics. Now is the time to build on this effort. Now is the time to incentivize student learning. Now is our time to assist our future leaders solve real-world challenges.

In summary, your House Republicans have a bold, comprehensive agenda for this session.

*We want to ensure taxes are not raised; more jobs are created, our public school students will excel, while at the same time maintaining a fiscally responsible government that is open and accountable.*

We are laser-focused on achieving this, and we look forward to working with single person in this chamber

Imua and Aloha! May God Bless this House, the people of Hawaii, and our great nation!